

**Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments**  
**H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING**  
**JUNE 30, 2023.**

**Testimony of Zee Bendici**  
**Appropriations Committee 02/17/2022**  
**Increase Funding for Independent Living Centers by \$1 million**

My name is Zee Bendici and I work at Independence Northwest, one of five centers for independent living in Connecticut. I joined Independence Northwest through an AmeriCorps program and was hired part-time shortly after. Overall, I have been with this nonprofit for a little over a year. I started off running the food assistance program, then co-created a volunteer program for the center. Now I provide COVID-19 education and resources, as well as do outreach and make informational videos for the Independence Northwest YouTube account.

This organization changes peoples' lives. Not just the lives of the people we serve, but our lives, too. I had no idea what I was going to do coming out of college, but Independence Northwest has given me a place to grow and really make an impact. The coronavirus has made life difficult for everybody, but especially for people with disabilities. Now more than ever we need organizations like Independence Northwest to provide this essential support. I am asking you to increase the funding for the state's centers by one million dollars more than last year. The services that we provide put people in control of their lives while keeping them safe and empowered. This funding will not go to waste.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. We need your help to make a difference.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Zee Bendici  
Outreach Coordinator  
Independence Northwest, Inc